

Masthead

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Photo courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

THE STORY OF TWO SURVIVING COLONIAL CHURCHES

**IN THE OLDE COUNTY OF NANSEMOND AND
A CEMETERY FORGOTTEN, NOW RECLAIMED**

PART ONE

It was a time of chaos in Great Britain under King James I, the Hereditary Land lease agreements had changed to the Feudal, religious persecution, and economic conditions had deteriorated. Even with the failures of the Raleigh colonies of 1585-1587 supported by Queen Elizabeth, the bright promise of the New World in Virginiae, gave hope. A paradise, where the rich could become richer, and the poor, a hope to survive for a better life. The reality, it was a time of violence, starvation, cannibalism, and the desperate will to overcome. From the seeds of James Towne in 1607, which struggled to survive, came a new civilization of people, and the destruction of another. With them came religion, and with it, built on the souls of those that had perished, a foundation, and eventually freedom of religion. (cont'd. page 4)

MEET YOUR NEW PRESIDENT



PRETLOW HENDERSON

Pretlow Henderson, a deeply rooted Suffolk native, grew up in the Everets community of Suffolk. He graduated from Nansemond-Suffolk Academy in 1993. Sticking with family tradition, he headed to Blacksburg to become a third generation HOKIE. Pretlow graduated in 1998 from Virginia Tech with degrees in Finance and Management Science.

He then moved to Raleigh where he met his wife, Mary Kemple, and began a consulting career that would have him travel across the U.S. and around the world advising companies like Electrolux, Neutrogena, Dr. Pepper/Snapple, and Miller-Coors. In 2004, Pretlow joined Smithfield Foods and returned to Suffolk. He is currently the Director of Information Technology for Birdsong Peanuts..

Pretlow enjoys spending time with his wife and two boys, Will and Cross, working in the yard, playing golf and tennis, skiing, and coaching boys lacrosse.

LETTER FROM DIRECTOR

Greetings Members!

Welcome to 2018 and the 52nd year of the Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society (SNHS). This year has already gotten off to a great start and I am excited about the year ahead.

We opened up the year with a new exhibit, "Quilts Galore & More". This exhibit, as well as our previous exhibits, has received a great response from the community. It has been enjoyed by those of all ages and backgrounds. If you have not seen the exhibit, please make plans to do so. The exhibit will run through the end of April and can be viewed during our regular business hours or by appointment. The purpose of these exhibits is to display our many collections throughout the year, so that they may be enjoyed by all.

One of the goals this year at the SNHS is to increase our membership. This goal can be achieved with the help of those, like yourself, who already support the society. Please take the opportunity this year to share with at least one person, the mission of the society and the benefits of becoming a member. The society consists of a large group of people who want to preserve the history of Suffolk and Nansemond County and educate future generations. We do this to honor our past and guide our future. A membership in the society not only supports our mission, but also gives history lovers an opportunity to learn from others and form relationships with like-minded friends.

I am also excited about our Newsletters for the upcoming year, another benefit of membership. This year we will be covering a very interesting subject in a four part series. I look forward to seeing you throughout the year and thank you for your support.

*Best regards,
Kimberly Blair Greene*

HAPPENINGS AT HEADQUARTERS

Quilts Galore & More

Our current exhibit, *Quilts Galore & More* has been viewed by many, including those from several states away. This exhibit features quilts from the SNHS collections and loaned quilts from others in the community. Every quilt has a story woven within its fabric and with this exhibit we have tried to share some of those stories. If you have not had a chance to view this exhibit, it will be on display until the end of April.



Yearbooks Digitized



Suffolk High School Yearbooks (1917-1990) have been digitized and will be released to the public, via website in 2018. We are very excited to offer these to those who have family members within the pages. Continue to follow our website suffolkhistory.org for updates and how to access these yearbooks.

SNHS Gift Shop

The much anticipated *SNHS Gift Shop* will be opening at the Phillips-Dawson House next month. This gift shop will feature publications, book, prints, memorabilia and heirloom items. Also, some collection items will be on display for the public to view. Stop by in late April and pick up a piece of history.



Special Collections

We are adding a new section to our Newsletters, *Special Collections*. It will feature an item from our collections, so that these items can be enjoyed by our membership.



This quarter we are featuring an antique silver teapot with stand. This teapot was made in London in the year 1789, during the reign of George III. English sterling silver, octagonal in form with bright cut decoration, bearing the marker's mark of Henry Chawner, Silversmith. This item was given to the society in 2000 by James. M. Habel, III.

THE STORY OF TWO SURVIVING COLONIAL CHURCHES



St. John's Church, Nansemond County, Va.

Unfortunately, a fire in the home of Christopher Jackson in April of 1734, which was the repository of official documents for Nansemond county, destroyed the earliest records, and only an attempt to reconstitute present land ownership at that time was minimally accomplished. It must be noted, that an Act of Creating the Towne of Suffolk by the Virginia General Assembly wasn't until May 1742, and only a handful of modest one and a half story plantation houses are mentioned in 1728.

Due to these lack of records, and the subsequent fires of 13 May 1779 by the British in the Collier, Mathew's raid which burned Suffolk towne, and the 7 February 1866 fire which consumed the Clerk's office, it presents as Fillmore Norfleet stated in *Bible Records of Suffolk and Nansemond County, Virginia*, "an almost insurmountable problem to historians and genealogist, professional or otherwise". This is problematic to determine original dates of construction for the first three churches in what is now the boundaries of the modern city of Suffolk, however, there are grains of suggestion scattered about in such publications as, "Cavaliers and Pioneers", "Henings Statutes at Large", "The Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia", and the tireless works of many local historians too numerous to mention here.

In the year 1619, Captain Christopher Lawne, a Puritan, established his settlement under Hog island on a spit of land along the south-side of the James river, against the advice of the Virginia Council due to safety concerns. This settlement failed the same year and caused the death of Captain Christopher Lawne as stated by the *Virginia Council* due to "bad water".

A business partner of Lawne in the East India company, and an Elder of the ancient church in Amsterdam, Edward Bennett, also a Puritan, and a wealthy naval merchant in London owning a fleet of ships, established a plantation East of Lawne's failed attempt at Warrosquoyake, named for the Algonquian speaking tribe at what is now Burwell's Bay by a patent in 1621. Others such as Captain Nathaniel Basse, and Arthur Swayne arrived and settled at what is now Day's Poynt that same year. Edward Bennett built the first church at his plantation in this area of the South-side, also known as "Edward Bennett's Plantation", the "Rocks", and "Bennett's Welcome", this church is mentioned in the minutes of the *"General court"* in 1629 of records that were submitted to the court by its "mynisters and Churchwardens". Edward Bennett sent his brother Richard Bennett to manage the plantation who died 28 March 1626, with Captain John Chew taking over its operations. John Chew caused problems with the General Court, and a hold was placed on Edward Bennett sending more settlers. This court action caused Edward Bennett to send his nephews Richard Bennett and Robert Bennett to resolve the issue and take over the plantation from John Chew. This is detailed in the *"General Court minutes"* of 21 January 1628. Richard Bennett brought Edward's fledgling plantation to success by 1632, and Governor West granted to Richard Bennett 2,000 acres on the East-side of the Nansemond river for *"importing"* forty persons to the colony in 1635.

"Elizabeth Shire" was established on both sides of Hampton Roads in 1634, as the West, and East-sides of the Nansemond river became settled through *"headrights"*, which was land for the transport of colonists to the colony in both freemen, and indentured servants. Through the carving out of the counties, what would become Nansemond county, would change in 1636 to New Norfolk county, and in 1639 to Upper Norfolk county. In March 1645 Upper Norfolk county was renamed Nansimum, and through a variety of spellings of the vernacular of the Algonquian pronunciation of its village and river, the present spelling of Nansemond county came about. (cont'd. next Newsletter)



Glebe Church, Jordan's Hill

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: *John Cross*, Author and Historical Researcher; *Larry and Helen Todd*, Co-Chairs of the Glebe Church Historical Committee; *Lynn Rose*, Historian-Greater Chuckatuck Historical Foundation; *Richard Bennett Trust*; *Glebe Trust*. **SPECIAL APPRECIATION:** *Kermit Hobbs*, Historian Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society; *Kimberly Blair Greene*, Executive Director SNHS.

UPDATES

MEET YOUR VICE PRESIDENT



STEPHANIE MOORE

Stephanie originally moved to Suffolk's Lakeside neighborhood near downtown, with her family in 1975. Downtown Suffolk was an ideal place to grow up, in the 1970's and 80's. Back then, children were afforded a lot of independence, and many opportunities to participate in community activities. Stephanie and her friends walked from Thomas Jefferson Elementary, to Girl Scouts' meetings and choir practices at St. Paul's Episcopal Church during the school year, and they rode bicycles to High's for ice cream and to the swimming pool during the summer. She fondly recalls helping her mother and Sue Woodward decorate for the SNHS Candlelight Christmas Tour, in Holland c. 1978.

After graduating from Nansemond-Suffolk Academy in 1983, Stephanie earned a B. A. in Political Science from Mary Baldwin University, and she earned a Master's Degree in Elementary Education from William and Mary. Stephanie taught 5th and 6th grades for 16 years.

In 2007, Stephanie moved back to Suffolk, to be near family. After returning to Suffolk, she worked as an interior decorator, and briefly owned an antiques and interior design business in downtown Suffolk. In 2008, 2009, and 2010 Stephanie helped decorate homes on the SNHS Candlelight Christmas Tours, and she has served on the board for the last year.

Suffolk Seaboard Railroad Station Museum

A Dream Fulfilled... A Time Well Spent

Years before the Train Station opened in August of 2000, a team of volunteers worked tirelessly to S.O.S., *Save Our Station*. There were many ups and downs, but never a thought of giving up. The dream was to save and open the Seaboard Train Station to the public. Beyond that, there was not an established business plan or clear picture of what it would be, but with confidence and hard work the restoration moved forward. Those who oversaw the project knew that whatever happened after the building was saved would be good for Suffolk and that has certainly been the case. Saving that wonderful little building became the catalyst for many other projects downtown, the center of the wheel that produced improvement and restoration of the surrounding area.

Miraculously, the Station continued to operate for 18 years with the help and commitment of volunteers and members of SNHS. It was fun and challenging and frustrating at times, but they kept on going just like *The Little Engine That Could*. As times changed and volunteers faded away it became apparent that the Train Station needed more attention and financial support than a small group could provide. So, SNHS and Preservation of Historic Suffolk (PHS), approached the City of Suffolk to ask if they were willing to take over the Station. The Station had come full circle, because in the beginning, SNHS had a partnership with the City. Without that public/private partnership the completed project may not have happened. Of course, once the Train Station opened, the first tenant was the City's newly established visitor's center. They shared an employee and volunteers. How appropriate that when SNHS and PHS decided it was time to pass the Station to a new caretaker, it was the City to whom they turned.

The time has flown, but all is well. If you have not been by to see the changes that have been made, please go. The wonderful model that so many men worked on for days and months and years is still in place and continues to tell the story of Suffolk to visitors. It will be preserved as it stands.

Last but not least, a big "thank you" to those volunteers who remained faithful to the cause and kept things going at the Station. Naming them all would be impossible, but the last group that served as the Train Station committee included Tommy Arthur, Skip Sledge, Karen Hughes, Bob Tompert, Marie Baker, Barbara McPhail and Conrad Haas. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Thanks to the hard work of many, the Station will thrive and continue to be a bright spot on Main Street for generations to come. It has been quite a journey.



SPRING MEMBERSHIP BANQUET

Although, it certainly did not feel like spring, we had a great banquet last month, while we watched the snow fall down and pile up. SNHS appreciates those who came out to support the society, to spite the weather, and we trust all made it home safely.

There were many highlights from the evening, but most notably would have to be the presentation from the Virginia General Assembly, presented by Delegate Chris Jones. The House Joint Resolution No. 799, commending SNHS for 50 years of service to the community, was an honor to receive and will be displayed at the Phillips-Dawson House for all to see.



The food, which is always good, was another highlight of the evening. After a vote from the membership, SNHS gained two new members to the board; Steve Jackson and Kerry Holmes. We also announced our new president, Pretlow Henderson and vice president, Stephanie Moore. Via PowerPoint, SNHS shared with our members, the highlights of 2017 and goals for 2018.

It was bittersweet, however to say goodbye to our president, Sandra Councill, of the last two years. Sandra has served the society well and was instrumental in the development and publication of the Historic Suffolk Coloring Book project. Sandra is also responsible for every beautiful arrangement that has passed through the Phillips-Dawson House. Where she is able to find all those beautiful flowers is a mystery only she can tell. The sweet part is that Sandra will remain on the board as a vital part of the society and its functions.



As we look forward into the coming months, we are most grateful for your membership and support. Thank you from all of us at SNHS.

APRIL 7, 2018

Civil War Tours

w/ *Kermit Hobbs*



The morning tour bus will leave the Seaboard Train Station Museum at 9:30am and return around 11:30am. This tour will include the Nansemond River Overlook, the Fort Connecticut site, Deserted House battlefield, and the G.W. Smith home site. The cost will be \$15 per person for FBC members and SNHS members or \$17 for non-members.

The afternoon tour bus will leave the Train Station at 1:00pm and return around 4:00pm. This tour will include the Nansemond River Overlook, Fort Stevens, Fort Rosecrans, and Hill's Point Battery. There will be a considerable amount of walking through woods, up and down hills on the afternoon tour. The cost will be \$18 per person for FBC members and SNHS members or \$20 for non-members.

Reservations and payment may be made with SNHS at **539-2781**. Reservations are only secured when they are paid.

Sponsored by First Baptist Church & Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society

Calendar of Events

Afternoon Conversations

SPEAKER SERIES

LOCATION: 137 BANK ST.

“THE BATTLE OF GREATBRIDGE”

April 11 @ 2:00-3:00 PM

“CHIPOKES PLANTATION”

by *Kevin Koons*

May 9 @ 2:00-3:00 PM

Sponsored by Suffolk Public Library & Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society

suffolkpubliclibrary.com



In conjunction with **Suffolk Tourism**, their **Historic Downtown Narrated Bus Tour** will now include periodic stops at the Phillips-Dawson House for house tours.

In 2017 tours of the headquarters increased ten-fold, with visitors throughout the United States, Canada and France.

You can sign up to take the tour yourself or tell a friend, family member or tourist know that this is available. Please check their website for dates and availability throughout the year.

<https://www.visitsuffolkva.com>

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Phillips-Dawson House Venue Rentals

The Phillips-Dawson House is available for clubs, receptions, parties, meetings, speakers and even weddings. The facility can accommodate up to 75 standing and 40 seated. Banquet ware is available up to 40 and we have a full kitchen and bar area for your convenience. We have a tuned grand piano and plenty of room for other musical equipment. The back yard area can also be used for an outdoor event. Donations for rental is use is accepted during regular business hours. Nominal fees for after hours use. We look forward to hosting your next special event, as you make your own history.



Call: 757-539-2781 for more information.

Coming next Newsletter

- ⇒ **Part II of our four-part series on:
*The Story of Two Surviving Colonial Churches***
- ⇒ **Summer History Camp** at the Phillips-Dawson House.
- ⇒ **MORE Afternoon Conversations** speakers!

**Suffolk-Nansemond
Historical Society
501(c)(3) Non-Profit**

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Kimberly Blair Greene

HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday	9:00am-3:00pm
Tuesday	9:00am-3:00pm
Wednesday	CLOSED
Thursday	9:00am-3:00pm
Friday	9:00am-12:00pm
Saturday	CLOSED
Sunday	CLOSED

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